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AFGHANISTAN

SNAPSHOT

Waging Peace, Opening Minds

**USAID projects help
Zabul Province residents
see the U.S. in a new
light**



Photo: USAID/CADG/CDP

Shehzad, a police officer, keeping watch over workers on a project site in Qalat, Zabul Province.

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Shehzad is a police officer in Qalat who frequently provides security services for Central Asia Development Group (CADG), a USAID implementing partner. He does this in his official capacity, as well as voluntarily during his free time, because he is grateful for the benefits that USAID projects have brought to his community in Zabul Province.

Employing more than 13,650 Zabul residents, the USAID projects are indeed making a profound impact in the province by providing jobs to people who might have otherwise joined the insurgency in a desperate attempt to support their families. More than 135 km of canals, numerous roads, sidewalks, check dams, and culverts, and 468 karez wells in the area have been renovated.

However, beyond employment and infrastructure rehabilitation, the USAID projects have also allowed many residents of Zabul to gain their first direct exposure to Westerners. Throughout rural Afghanistan, many Afghans have been conditioned since childhood to revile Westerners as the enemy. Shehzad explains, "The people are poor and uneducated. They know only war and the propaganda they have been taught since they were children, but USAID and CADG are the only organizations here really helping them."

This exposure has brought about a change in local sentiment toward the West. "Before the projects began, most of the people here did not like Westerners, and the Afghans who worked with them were questioned," said Shehzad. "Now, Afghan engineers employed on the USAID projects can walk down the street in Qalat and are invited to events and parties. People are very happy with the work USAID is doing."

Through continued cooperation in the implementation of development projects, the influence of ignorance, propaganda, and hate peddled by the insurgency can be mitigated. Many in Zabul have already chosen development over violence, signaling a monumental paradigm shift toward reconciliation and away from insurgency. USAID is capitalizing on this momentum and using development to successfully wage peace throughout Zabul Province.